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U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk test drives 2008 Tesla Roadster. The electric sports car gets an equivalent of 245 mpg after a charge and under the Apollo Energy Independence Act, owners would be eligible for up to a \$7,000 tax credit.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Il.) showcased 10 vehicles at the Museum of Science and Industry Wednesday that promise to significantly reduce America's dependence on foreign oil.

The car show, featuring several kinds of hybrid, electric and alternative fuel vehicles, came one day before Kirk's push for legislation to make alternative vehicle tax credits permanent, while, he says, reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil by 86 percent.

Kirk predicted that his legislation, named the Apollo Energy Independence Act, will move through Congress and gain passage quickly.

"I think they are going to move [on the legislation] in September," he said. "Now that Sen. Obama has endorsed off-shore drilling, there's no way they are going to stop a bill."

Kirk's legislation picks up where the 2005 Energy Policy Act left off. The three-year-old bill also created federal incentives to spur alternative energy vehicle development, but the tax credits

offered in 2005 phased out after the first 60,000 of each vehicle model was sold. It also did not include plug-in electric vehicles on its list of eligible cars.

High school and college students from the 10th [Congressional] District Student Leadership Advisory Board and representatives from Argonne National Laboratory popped the hoods of several types of hybrid, electric and alternative fuel cars currently on the market that would qualify for a credit if Kirk's bill passes.

Highwood resident David Serafini took advantage of a similar Illinois tax credit by converting his Chevrolet truck to electric power this summer. Serafini said the \$4,000 payoff was a nice bonus.

"I'm going to be using it for 95 percent of commuting, going to work commuting, hardware store, while everyone else is bleeding four bucks a gallon," he said.

The cost saved on gas is no pocket change either. Robert Dixon, a member of the Fox Valley Electric Auto Association, said it costs him about \$1.50 to charge his converted Mazda MX6 for four hours.

"I can get about 40 miles out of that charge and it goes highway speeds," Dixon said. "I think we need to really shift our mindset away from internal combustion engines and be more conscious about the energy we use to transport ourselves."

The ecological and consumer cost benefits of alternative vehicles coupled with other tax and market incentives proposed in the Apollo Act—increased alternative energy production and efficiency in homes, commercial buildings and appliances; encouraging public transportation; eliminating trade barriers to cheap foreign ethanol—would decrease foreign oil use by up to 10 million barrels a day according a study commissioned by the National Hydrogen Association.

On Thursday, Kirk said he will argue for passage of the new bill on the floor of the House. If it is enacted, he has his eye on either the \$21,000 Toyota Prius Hybrid or its more expensive cousin, the \$109,000 electric 2008 Tesla Roadster.

“If I could find a used Tesla, I’d get it,” Kirk said.